

# Open Channels



## Environmental goals utilize academia, roundtable discussions

### *The New Orleans District proclamation on how they will implement the Environmental Operating Principles*

by Eric Lincoln, New Orleans District

Each district in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is unique in terms of geography, culture, ecosystems and many other factors. As Aldo Leopold wrote in 1949, "The life of every river sings its own song."

Perhaps the New Orleans District stands out as the most fascinating of all the Corps districts with its connection to the mighty Mississippi River and its estuary, one of the busiest ports in the world, petroleum production, and 40 percent of the

nation's coastal wetlands in the lower 48 states that are disappearing at an alarming rate. The songs of the rivers and bayous in the New Orleans District are still being written, but we are now the composers. What song will we create?

While the New Orleans District has a history since the early 1970s of blending environmental stewardship, commerce and economic development, the implementation of the seven Environmental Operating

Principles (EOP) has brought the district to a new level of awareness and commitment to the environment. It was fitting that Lt. Gen. Robert Flowers announced the EOP at the dedication ceremony for the Davis Pond Freshwater Diversion Project March 26, 2002.

What innovations will the New Orleans District put into practice to address the EOP? See the district's Environmental Operating Principles listed on pages 11 and 12.



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## **WELCOME BACK “OPEN CHANNELS”**

by Brig. Gen. Don T. Riley

This is a great opportunity for the Mississippi Valley Division to once again distribute our flagship publication, “Open Channels.” Not published since the early 1990’s, this is an important tool for our communications within, and external to, the division.

Reflected throughout the pages are the stories of the division. Our intent is to talk more about the people of our great organization than any specific project.

We truly are a remarkable organization that doesn’t boast much about how good we are, but we just go about our daily tasks with little heraldry. It is important, though, that others know of the great work we are doing and the wonderful people in the division, and I hope we can do some of that through “Open Channels.”

Each one of the following five themes can stand alone as important messages, but collectively they represent what we are and where we are headed as we lead the nation in water resources stewardship. To make this effort successful, your contributions to “Open Channels” are important.

I would also like to use “Open Channels” as a means of keeping you informed about some of our toughest challenges and new initiatives, and we would like your feedback on what you would like to see in this publication.

Thank you all for what you do.

## **Essayons!**



### **Speaking with one voice**

**To guide our communications efforts, we have developed five key themes to focus our collective voices:**

- 1. The Corps supports the nation’s needs.**
- 2. We are capable and ready.**
- 3. We seek a sustainable balance of economic, environmental and social requirements across the watershed.**
- 4. We are transforming our internal processes to reduce costs and improve our responsiveness and quality.**
- 5. We don’t work alone – we are part of a national team of federal, state, local and private organizations.**

**#**



# Pepper Spray Option now Here

by Scott Strotman, Operations Division  
photos by Mark Kane, Public Affairs  
Rock Island District

It was clear and sunny, but a fairly cold day at Coralville Lake on Feb. 12. With the temperature in the low- to mid-20s, rangers stood outside, some in T-shirts, waiting their turn to be sprayed, while others waited to help with decontamination. Once sprayed, students were required to fend off other rangers who posed as attackers in order to earn a good dousing of decontamination spray. They were then escorted into a heated maintenance garage. There, the welcome relief of the warmth, plenty of fresh water, shampoo and more decon spray awaited them.

However, getting sprayed is one thing, spraying another person is an entirely different matter, especially when that another person is your own team member.

"I was somewhat hesitant about spraying other people at first," said José Rivera, a pepper spray instructor and ranger at Saylorville Lake. "I knew what it felt like and wasn't sure I wanted to deliver that discomfort to people I work with."

But, after considering the safe and controlled environment, and his own personal experience, Rivera volunteered to spray the first group of students. And Feb. 12, the district's first group of rangers certified to carry pepper spray graduated from the pepper-spray training course.

Pepper spray was approved as a defensive tool for use by rangers in April of last year. The next step was to train a select few as trainers.



**José Rivera, Saylorville Lake Ranger, hesitantly looks down the nozzle of a canister of Oleoresin Capsicum (pepper spray) milliseconds before being sprayed directly in the face as a part of train-the-trainer training held at the Clock Tower Building last fall. As a result of successfully completing the training, Rivera is now a certified pepper spray instructor.**

"Train-the-trainer" training occurred in September of last year. At that time, a select amount of rangers from every district in the Mississippi Valley Division were trained as trainers, which included four rangers from the district, one each from Coralville Lake, Red Rock Lake, Saylorville Lake and the Mississippi River. Then, in February, training efforts for all park rangers in the district was initiated.

While the training is mandatory, getting sprayed and carrying pepper spray is voluntary. So far, 47 rangers and two district-office team members have received basic pepper spray training. Of those, 17 have elected to carry pepper spray and have received live spray. A second training session was held Feb. 25, but there was no

opportunity to be sprayed. A third training session will be held this month, so the total number of volunteers carrying pepper spray will change.

Now that summer and this year's recreation season are in full swing, rangers who volunteered have already begun carrying pepper spray. Most are grateful the Corps has finally authorized pepper spray as a defensive tool that rangers can use to extricate themselves from a sticky situation, if the need ever arises.

"At first I didn't plan to get sprayed at all, but I hadn't really thought about the fact that I might be called upon to assist another ranger in trouble (not just myself), and I would regret not having the ability to assist them as fully as possible," said Tracy Spry, Red Rock Lake. "Even so, I most sincerely hope that day never comes."

"It's a good thing," said Cindy Klebe, Mississippi River Project. "Hopefully I won't need to use it, but I'm glad I have the option."

"Pepper spray will be a good defensive tool for rangers to have," said Jeff Rose, Saylorville Lake. "I will still use good judgment and be aware of my surroundings to stay out of situations. However, in the event I am involved in a situation beyond my control, it will be nice to have some method of self-defense besides throwing my radio at someone!"

Kevin Ewbank, Illinois Waterway, has similar thoughts.

*(see Pepper, next page)*





## -Pepper-

“Pepper spray is something that, hopefully, will never be needed,” said Ewbank. “We need to continue our emphasis that our people are trained and experienced in interpersonal communications, verbal Judo, etc., and that they have the right personality to be dealing with visitors in a stressful situation. I am concerned that some people within the Corps will put the emphasis on getting out of bad situations, instead of avoiding them.”

With the excellent ranger safety record present in the district (and throughout the rest of the Corps for that matter), in addition to many years of experience gained by some, it is easy to understand why others are not as concerned.

“I do not want to personally carry it,” said Marvin Morris, Saylorville Lake. “I thought back over 28 years of serving as a park ranger and could not recall one instance where I think

I would have been safer carrying it.”

“I do not believe I need it,” said John Noble, Mississippi River Project. “I am not going to get myself in a situation where I need it — I will be long gone using my cell phone and radio by the time it escalates. If someone jumps me and I am unprepared for the attack, the spray could be used against me anyway.”

As reported in a previous article, Rock Island District decided that someone that carries pepper spray must be sprayed during the training to better prepare carriers in the event of indirect exposure. For some it was very frustrating that the rest of the Corps had the option of carrying pepper spray without the requirement of being sprayed. Procedures for spraying carriers has been negotiated with the Union.

But whether rangers want to carry it, don’t want to, or are sitting on the

fence, the consensus is nearly unanimous and could be summed up by Joseph Laird, Lake Red Rock.

“I think it was good that the Corps approved carrying pepper spray,” said Laird. “Pepper spray is a valuable tool for all rangers to have. It is just like having access to radios, cell phones, etc.”



**Chuck Crocker, Mark Twain Lake, St. Louis District, sprays inert pepper spray at Chris Botz, Baldhill Dam, St. Paul District, during pepper spray training at the Clock Tower Building Sept. 25. Botz was simulating an attack on Diane Stratton, Wappapello Lake, St. Louis District, as part of the training.**

## Project engineers volunteer for ‘Mathcounts’ competition

by Peter Verstegen, St. Paul District

Two St. Paul District project engineers volunteered in the junior high math competition in Rochester, Minn., Feb. 1.

Sharonne Baylor from the Winona, Minn., resident office and Lisa Brantner, from the LaCrosse, Wis., resident office, were scorers in the Mathcounts competition in Rochester.

More than 90 students from 13 schools in southeastern Minnesota participated. Rochester Community Technical College hosted and sponsored the competition.



**Sharonne Baylor (left) from the Winona, Minn., resident office, and Lisa Brantner from the LaCrosse, Wis., resident office, scored students in a math competition in Rochester, Minn., Feb. 1.**

The Minnesota Society of Professional Engineers, in which Baylor and Brantner are members, coordinated the competition.

Mathcounts is a national math coaching and competition program that promotes math achievement by 6th, 7th and 8th grade students. The program stimulates student interest by making math achievement as challenging, exciting and prestigious as school sports.

Students compete in local meets in February, either as members of a four-student team or as individuals. Winners then progress to the state contest in March. The top four scorers in the state competition earn an all-expense-paid trip to Chicago, Ill., to represent Minnesota in the national finals in mid-June. *Lisa Brantner supplied the information for this article.*



# Memphis District rehabs Beaver Lake campsite for Little Rock District

by Jim Pogue, Memphis District

As part of our ongoing efforts to seek unmet needs and develop sustainable infrastructure solutions, the Memphis District's Special Projects Branch has completed \$159,000 worth of improvements to a campsite at the Little Rock District's Beaver Lake.

"We upgraded the electrical connections at 28 campsites at the Dam Site, Lake Park," Richard Blake, chief of the Special Projects Branch said. "We removed old electrical wires and pedestals, and replaced the 20-amp services with 20/30/50 amp supplies for the larger RVs. We also installed larger transformers so they wouldn't experience brownouts there."

Blake said his crew also did some site improvements and other work to, "fix up the campground a little." The work came about as a result of similar work the Memphis District did for the Little Rock District at Clearwater Lake near Piedmont, Mo.



photo by Dennis Turner

**Pulling new electrical cables to power pedestals at campsites was just one of the jobs tackled by Memphis District work crews.**

"We started the project (at Beaver Lake) in March 2002 but didn't finish until December because higher than normal water covered several of the sites," Blake said.

Beaver Dam Park is located on the White River, nine miles west of Eureka Springs, in northwestern Arkansas. It is open to visitors from April 1 through Oct. 31 each year.

Dennis Turner of the Little Rock District worked directly with Memphis District crews to get this work done. In his evaluation of their performance, Turner said the overall quality of their work was "very good." Commenting on the work crew's schedule and cost controls, he said, "This work was performed in approximately one-sixth the time it would have taken with a contract. It's great to get any funding left over back to the project."

"This would never happen with a regular construction project."

Turner also commented on the exceptional flexibility shown by Memphis District workers. "Removing shoreline brush and placing (it) in piles for later burning was greatly appreciated and is an example of changes and additions," he said.

Turner added, "Many thanks to you Mr. Blake and the crew that performed this work. We will be looking for more work for you as the funding permits."

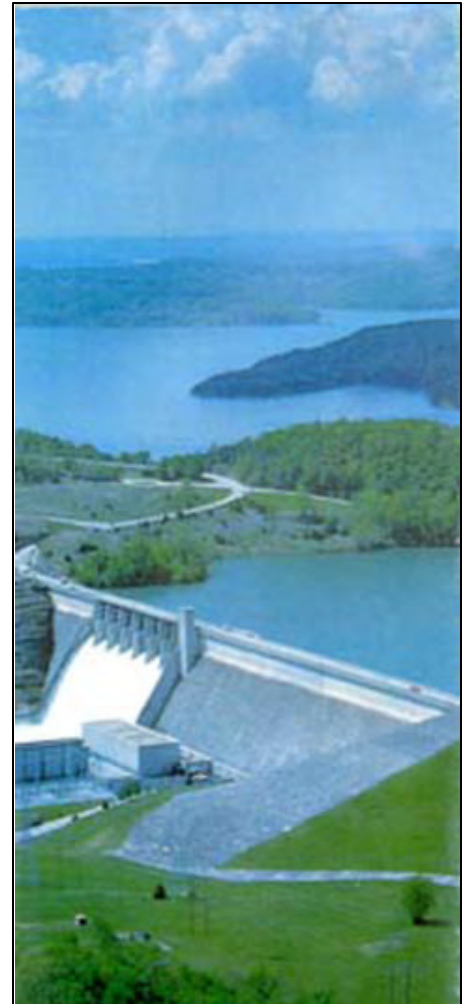


photo by Dennis Turner

**Beaver Lake Dam is operated by the Little Rock District. It is located in northwestern Arkansas near Eureka Springs**

Memphis District team members contributing to this work were -- from Special Projects Branch: Claude Crump, Kenney Burden and Charlie Crowley. From Shops Unit: Scott Collins. From M/V Mississippi: Jessie Beard and Irinza Smith. From BPP #11: James Ward, Bill Owens, Rob Ridinger. From Yard and Docks: Jerry Childers.



# St. Louis District celebrates Earth Day

by Lattissua Tyler, St. Louis District

In 1970, Gaylord Nelson, then a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, proposed the first nationwide Earth Day. His goal was to help elevate environmental issues to greater prominence on the national agenda. It was a political gamble on Nelson's part, but it worked and is today one of the legislative initiatives for which he is best remembered. Thirty-three years later, an estimated 20 million Americans participate in annual events calling for a healthy, sustainable environment.

Included in the 20 million Americans are numerous Corps of Engineers' employees. Each year, USACE, St. Louis District, plans and organizes numerous events during the Earth Day Holiday. The goal of each event is to help strengthen our community by focusing on common bonds and creating dialogue based on shared interests.

"The Corps works closely with state and local governments, businesses, environmental groups and individuals all across the country who are at the forefront of some of the most innovative and effective efforts to address environmental conditions in their communities," said Dennis Fenske, St. Louis District Project Manager.

One of the 2003 activities organized to celebrate the 33rd Earth Day holiday was the district's partnership with the St. Louis Earth Day network. St. Louis Earth Day's mission to foster environmental appreciation through celebration, education and stewardship is aligned with the Corps' dedication to environmental stewardship.



**Promoting EOP number 7, the power of collaboration and synergy, to Earth Day participants, Joe Kellett, St. Louis Deputy for Project Management takes part in the 2003 Earth Day Panel and media conference at the Missouri Botanical Garden.**

Since 1989, St. Louis has held an annual Earth Day festival that has grown to be one of the major opportunities for communities in the metro area to celebrate the growing resurgence in interest in the environment. Hosted by St. Louis Earth Day, a non-profit organization, the festival includes numerous activities from a run/walk for the Rivers, an all species parade, an Earth Day spring choral concert and park restoration projects.

Four years ago the organization established an Earth Day Symposium to promote dialogue among stakeholders who shared common interests in the environment. This year's symposium, which took place April 22, 2003, highlighted national, regional and local models of urban watershed restoration. During the day-long event, several St. Louis District representatives used the symposium as an opportunity to tell attendees about the Corps' seven Environmental Operating Principles and Deputy District Engineer for Planning, Programs and Project Management, Joe Kellett, served as a panelist during a plenary session and media conference.

"We take our charge of environmental stewardship very seriously," Kellett told the audience. "Our participation in all the projects, or as I'd rather call them solutions, that we assist the community to achieve is guided by the Corps of Engineers' Environmental Operating Principles." said Kellett. "One of the fundamentals to which we are pledged in this area, is to listen actively and find win-win solutions that protect and enhance the environment."

"All of us working together, in a collective effort, can make this a reality."

Together with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District, conference sponsors included St. Louis Earth Day in cooperation with East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, Missouri Department of Conservation and the Metropolitan Parks & Recreation District. Participants featured elected officials, municipal, county and state government staff members, consulting engineers, interested citizens and of course, the St. Louis District.





# Saving the Soil We Call Home

by Jennifer B. Armand, Communications Consultant  
Restore or Retreat

Hurricane season always puts coastal communities on their toes, with plans and preparations kicking into high gear during the hot summer months when the warm waters of the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico breed some of the most powerful storms. But nothing could prepare residents of south Louisiana for two back-to-back storms that targeted this fragile coast in a two-week period during the fall of 2002, bringing devastating floodwaters and relentless winds that wreaked havoc on property and the landscape itself. It was Hurricane Lili, a category 4 storm with a 20-foot storm surge less than 12 hours prior to landfall, that now serves as a loud wake-up call for saving the valuable coastal wetlands that are the only natural barrier between these deadly storms and thousands of people who live and work in the region.

It's a message that Lori LeBlanc, Executive Director of the non-profit coastal advocacy group Restore or Retreat, drives home each day.

"We are at war, so to speak, with the Gulf of Mexico, and unfortunately, the Gulf is winning. The wetlands are our buffer zone, and with each mile that we lose, communities all across the coast are that much more at risk from the catastrophic damage inflicted by storms like Lili," LeBlanc says.

Realizing that the Barataria and Terrebonne basins in southeastern Louisiana are the two most rapidly eroding estuaries on the earth, and that the loss of these estuaries poses

dire economic and ecological consequences, residents and business owners of Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes formed Restore or Retreat in 2001. With a mission to identify, expedite and aggressively engage in solutions to urgently achieve comprehensive coastal restoration, the group has steadily grown in numbers and in strength over the past two years as more and more Louisianans have identified with the group's call for immediate action to halt land loss.

"Those of us who make our home and our living here in Barataria-Terrebonne know that, while land loss is an important environmental issue, it is also a critical economic issue. From the seafood industry to oil and gas, our wetlands provide economic benefit to the entire nation and fertile soil for a culture like no other in the world," explains Alex Plaisance, a Lafourche Parish business owner and president of Restore or Retreat.

"Early on, we realized that we couldn't expect people from other parts of the state or the nation to fight for our coast if people who live and work here didn't lead the charge. That's how Restore or Retreat was born," he says.

Looking at the numbers that dramatically illustrate the crisis along Louisiana's coast, it's obvious that the efforts of Restore or Retreat, as well as the other coastal advocacy groups in the state, could not be coming at a more important time. While South Louisiana is

home to 40 percent of the United States' coastal wetlands, 80 percent of the nation's total wetland loss occurs right here.

In fact, a staggering 30 square miles of valuable wetlands have been lost each year since 1930, roughly the size of a football field every 30 minutes. By 2050, it is estimated that nearly 1,000 square miles of Louisiana's wetlands will become open water. The nation stands to lose an area of coastal wetlands that is nearly the size of the state of Rhode Island.

*(see Wetlands, next page)*



**In its efforts to inform people throughout the country about Louisiana's coastal crisis and the urgent need to halt land loss, Restore or Retreat has become a partner in the America's Wetland Campaign to Save Coastal Louisiana. As the largest public awareness initiative in Louisiana history, the three-year America's Wetland campaign will raise awareness of the impact of Louisiana's wetland loss and increase support for efforts to conserve and save coastal Louisiana. [www.americaswetland.com](http://www.americaswetland.com)**



## -Wetlands-

Armed with statistics like these, LeBlanc says Restore or Retreat is spreading the message that Louisiana's land loss is a national emergency requiring an immediate, comprehensive restoration plan.

"Just like there is no one reason for land loss, there is no one project that will reclaim our entire coast. A long-term solution involving a multitude of realistic strategies that rely on natural processes is needed, and it will require a significant funding commitment from the federal and state governments to proceed," she explains. "Then and only then can South Louisiana expect to see real progress in saving the very soil beneath our feet."

Restore or Retreat, as well as hundreds of other groups and individuals across the state, have thrown their support behind Coast 2050, a strategic plan for the survival of Louisiana's coast prepared as a cooperative effort between federal, state and local agencies, as well as landowners, environmentalists, wetland scientists and local residents.

The total cost for implementing the complete Coast 2050 plan: \$14 billion. However, the cost we will incur as a nation if immediate action is not taken is estimated at more than \$150 billion in infrastructure alone.

One Coast 2050 strategy in particular, known as the Third Delta Conveyance Channel, is championed by Restore or Retreat as a significant land-building project for the Barataria-Terrebonne basin. The "Third Delta," as it is commonly referred, would involve the construction of a major diversion channel beginning on the west bank



**Restore or Retreat Executive Director Lori LeBlanc recently accompanied U.S. Congressman David Vitter of Louisiana on a helicopter tour of the vanishing Louisiana coastline. "If a picture is worth a thousand words, on this issue, a helicopter tour is worth several million," Vitter said.**

of the Mississippi River just downstream of Donaldsonville, La. Freshwater and sediment would flow from the main channel into smaller distributary channels, creating sub-deltas in the lower Terrebonne and Barataria basins. While levees eliminated the delta-building capacity of the Mississippi River nearly a century ago,

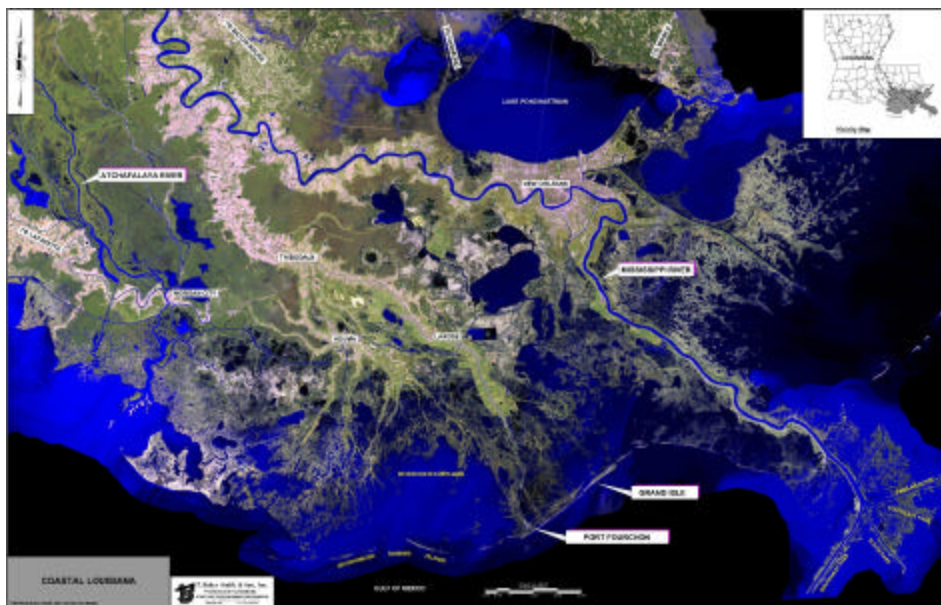


Restore or Retreat

the Third Delta project aims to recreate Mother Nature's delta-building processes in a region that has sustained serious loss for more than 70 years.

The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources is now proceeding with a feasibility study for the project.

Since the fall of 2001, LeBlanc, Plaisance and other supporters of Restore or Retreat have had the opportunity to meet with government officials, civic groups and business associations across the state and the nation to discuss Louisiana's coastal crisis, the urgent need for restoration funding and the solutions themselves. With important congressional project authorization anticipated within the next few years, their efforts to make the entire nation aware of Louisiana's plight are sure to intensify. And Restore or Retreat's message will remain the same. Without real action now, the entire country will lose an environmental and economic treasure we know and love: Louisiana's wetlands.



Satellite map of the disappearing Louisiana coast.





# Offices on track with environmental goals

## EOP is A-OK

by Eric Lincoln, New Orleans District



The dredge Beachbuilder pumps material into the edges of Southwest Pass. Marsh creation is one way the Corps is helping to re-establish land in coastal areas that are eroding.

The Corps' Environmental Operating Principles (EOP) have solidified the direction for the environmental mission at New Orleans District, according to leaders in four different areas.

The EOP "formalizes a lot of what we've already been doing," says Troy Constance, senior project manager for the Louisiana Coastal Restoration Study (LCA).

Constance, who is the head of a first-of-its-kind colocated team at the

district, believes that the EOP integrates well with the Project Management Business Process (PMBP). "This is where the rubber meets the road," he said.

Project managers for the LCA study and members of the colocated team are working with others in the Corps and academia to develop a \$14 billion plan to save the coast within about 30 years. The team expects to have a preliminary draft of the plan in June.

"Having a colocated team has changed the way we do business ... it's a very efficient way to operate; this level of involvement from other agencies is the wave of the future and will help us integrate PMBP with the EOP," says Constance.

Ronnie Ventola, chief of Regulatory Branch, said that the Regulatory Branch embodies the EOP. "This is already part of the regulatory landscape; part of what we consider and evaluate.

(see OK, next page)



**-OK-**

The EOP validates and supports what the regulatory program has tried to do through the years.”

Ventola said that the concepts in the EOP proclamation are familiar.

“The proclamation promises that the Corps will seek balance between projects and the environment by designing solutions to support both interests. Regulatory is a balancing agency. We don’t design the solutions, but we seek to balance the impacts against the benefits.

“We can fine tune and emphasize areas more based on the EOP, but more than anything, it shows us that we’re going in the direction the chief wants us to go.”

Linda Mathies, chief of Environmental Functions in Operations, Technical Support Branch, agrees the EOP “reinforces

what we’re already doing. We have a lot of coordination with state and federal agencies on projects to ensure environmental compliance of all maintenance dredging projects and any other maintenance activities at completed projects.”

Last year, for example, after the Bayou Lafourche project was completed, it was passed to Operations Division for operations and maintenance.

“When that project is ready to be dredged, we’ll check the existing environmental documents written and obtained during the planning phase to see if what is proposed there is still covered,” said Mathies.

“The EOP doesn’t really change anything for us. What it will do is give us backup for when project managers and operations managers say they don’t want to pay for something such as a cultural

resources survey or pumping dredged material to a new disposal area to restore wetlands.

We’ll be able to say, ‘We’re not operating within these principles if we do that.’ The EOP says that we will listen to what people say, so if we aren’t doing that then we need to give them a good reason why.”

Reuben Mabry, Environmental Team, General Engineering Branch, said that his office, as well, is on track with the EOP.

“We’re actually doing a lot of these things already,” he said.

Recently, a workshop for engineers worldwide looked at the long- and short-term strategies for incorporating the EOP into Corps culture, policy and guidance. One of the subjects discussed, Mabry said, were rating tools developed by the Army to determine how well environmental sustainability was integrated into project design.

“But military needs are different than ours,” noted Mabry. “They build barracks; we build levees. We need to develop a checklist for the civil works side so we know if we have environmental sustainability elements built into our projects. We can develop a tool similar to the military and we’ll be able to gage how effective we are.”

This checklist will be critical, said Mabry. “We need to develop it into everyday work processes so that it will be something everyone can use on a daily basis.”

Mabry said that the district might appoint an Environmental Operating Principles advocate who will keep an eye on how well the district is adhering to the EOP.



**A rock dike at Mile 51 along the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet prevents further damage to the shoreline from wave wash erosion.**



# New Orleans District

## Implementing Environmental Operating Principles

**EOP 1: Strive to achieve environmental sustainability. An environment maintained in a healthy, diverse and sustainable condition is necessary to support life.**

The New Orleans District understands this principle perhaps more than most, as we know how dependent we are locally, nationally and internationally on the environment. The district will implement a campaign each April in celebration of Earth Day to increase the awareness and use of environmentally friendly practices and materials in everything we do.

**EOP 2: Recognize the interdependence of life and the physical environment. Proactively consider environmental consequences of Corps programs and act accordingly in all appropriate circumstances.**

The New Orleans District will send out a semi-annual message to all the project managers and operations managers to remind and reinforce this message.

All project managers and operations managers will not only be invited to the Environmental Roundtable meetings already held at the New Orleans District, they will be asked to give presentations on their projects.

**EOP 3: Seek balance and synergy among human development activities and natural systems by designing economic and environmental**

**solutions that support and reinforce one another.**

Historically, our contributions to the nation through improved navigation and flood control demonstrate we are the world's premier public engineering organization. However, many past accomplishments were realized with little consideration given to impacts on the environment, which is no longer acceptable. These days, better planning, more coordination with resource agencies, technological advancements in project design, and development of less environmentally damaging construction methods allow us to continue to meet the nation's needs.

The New Orleans District has implemented and will continue to embark on projects designed to help restore the environment.

We will continue to use dredged material for environmental benefits where possible and actively plan projects with designs that balance environmental concerns with human development activities.

**EOP 4: Continue to accept corporate responsibility and accountability under the law for activities and decisions under our control that impact human health and welfare and the continued viability of natural systems.**

The New Orleans District will continue to utilize the Environmental Roundtable as a training vehicle to educate staff members on ongoing as well as new

environmental regulations, policies and legal requirements.

We will continue to utilize the Office of Counsel to review environmental impact statements and planning documents to ensure adequacy from a legal perspective.

We will use independent technical reviews to facilitate environmental compliance.

We will identify and require core-unit training for environmental personnel to assure knowledge of the laws and regulations on all facets of environmental compliance including the National Environmental Policy Act, Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, HTRW, etc.

Language will be added to division chiefs' job descriptions and TAPES, defining their commitment to implementing the EOP.

**EOP 5: Seek ways and means to assess and mitigate cumulative impacts to the environment; bring systems approaches to the full life cycle of our processes and work.**







We will continue to use the Regulatory RAMS database to consider indirect impacts and past, present and reasonably foreseeable impacts whether associated with the project or not.

We will monitor programmatic general permits activity to determine if individual permits with more detailed cumulative impacts analyses would be more appropriate.

**EOP 6: Build and share an integrated scientific, economic, and social knowledge base that supports a greater understanding of the environment and impact of our work.**

We will continue to utilize academic expertise in planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of our projects.

We will continue to strive to document the economic and social links to the environment.

We will keep the GIS system for threatened and endangered species updated, and continue to meet and dialogue with the public at special events, schools, conferences, etc.

**EOP 7: Respect the views of individuals and groups interested in Corps activities, listen to them actively, and learn from their perspective in the search to find innovative win-win solutions to the nation's problems that also protect and enhance the environment.**

We will develop a list of scientists, engineers, public interest groups and others with expertise in local and state environmental issues to be used for mailing lists and to be consulted by project delivery teams. The list should include name, field of expertise/interest, address, fax, e-mail address and phone number.

The New Orleans District will sponsor seminars inviting individuals with expertise in local and state environmental issues to give presentations on their field of interest, an on-going study, current research topic, etc., to district personnel. State and federal natural resources/regulatory agencies will be invited. We will encourage MVN managers, engineers and scientists to attend (these seminars are in addition to the Environmental Round Table).

We will add to the district web site lists of all district projects, including planning studies, O&M projects and pending permit actions that are accessible to public. These lists will include project name, status/schedule, brief description and point of contact with telephone number and e-mail.

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## Dicharry and the Industrial Canal Lock changed each other

By John Hall, New Orleans District

In more than 33-1/3 years of service to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, all performed in New Orleans District, Joe Dicharry had a hand in most of the projects of his era, which ended with retirement in January 2003.

But one stands out from all the others, the \$655 million Industrial Canal Lock Replacement Project in New Orleans.

The lock project transformed Gerald Joseph Dicharry Jr., just as the surrounding neighborhoods

transformed the project and the project will transform a vital link in American's inland waterways.

Early on "I was strictly a company man – by the book. I soon learned this wasn't going to work," Dicharry recalled over lunch at Dunbar's on Freret Street.

Beginning in the mid 1980s, Dicharry took over a lock replacement project authorized by Congress in 1956 that was at a standstill because of neighborhood opposition.

For one thing, the Corps wanted to displace a large number of homes. Residents also feared that already congested traffic would be further disrupted.

"You've got to put yourself in their place, look at it from their side. Look at how the 'Big Bad Corps' is coming across to them. You've got to understand what they wanted and were experiencing," he said.

*(see Canal, next page)*

Few questioned the Corps when Dicharry started in 1969. But times and the public changed, and a learning process began, he said, for him and the Corps of Engineers.

The experience was particularly intense for Dicharry. This writer can attest to that, having worked with him on the lock project for about 15 years, first as a Times-Picayune reporter and, in the past five years, a Corps public affairs employee.

One thing that made the lock project particularly unusual was its location in the midst of a densely populated urban area. The Corps' early ideas didn't help, and other factors got into the hotly oppositional stew: racial questions, anxious preservationists, concerned business operators and traffic questions surrounding the replacement of bridges on St. Claude and North Claiborne avenues.

Watching Dicharry over the years, I can tell you he is the epitome of the Army Corps of Engineers' professional. He conceivably took more abuse, including publicly uttered slurs on his personal integrity, than many other senior project managers combined in the New Orleans District.

Through it all, Joe Dicharry maintained his dignity. He never responded in kind to the ugliness and insults heaped upon him by some citizens and elected officials. Joe is a gentleman and above all, an honorable man.

"People kept asking me, 'Why didn't you request another project?'"

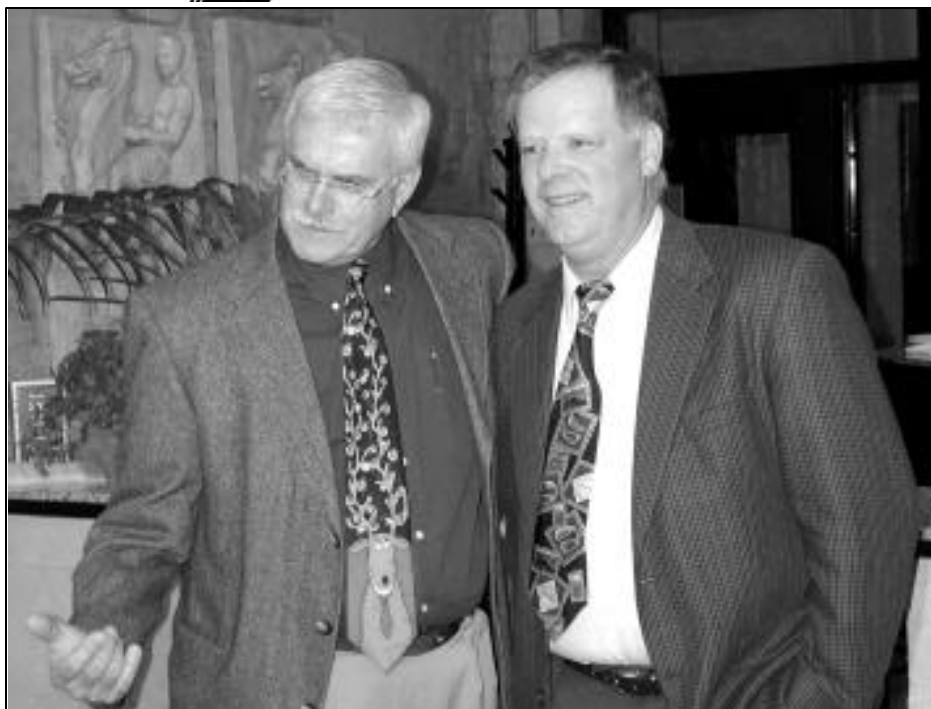


photo by Mike Maples

**Christopher Alfonso, left, Engineering Division, gives a parting testimony to friend and colleague Joe Dicharry.**

Because of all the roadblocks and opposition." He said, "What kept me going was I kept looking on it as a challenge."

Congress approved lock construction in 1998 and the project has been moving along slowly.

Since that time, neighborhood opposition has seemed to ebb. Dicharry was at the heart of changes that included no displacement of dwellings, shifting the new lock's location north of North Claiborne, providing a Community Impact Mitigation Plan, and agreeing to install an \$18 million temporary bridge over St. Claude.

Significant help came from successive project managers who worked for Dicharry.

First, there was Les Waguespack, now at Mississippi Valley Division in Vicksburg, who was important in shaping plans and changes. Later

there was Michael Stout, now the district's Recreation Team leader, who starred in getting the Community Based Mitigation Committee going, including hiring a consultant, GCR and Associates, to assist the independent committee.

"Until we get more mitigation done, including infrastructure, we will still have a lot of skepticism from the locals about the mitigation," Dicharry said. Much has been promised, but on mitigation, as well as on projects, money has been scarce.

As for the project itself, "As we can get more contracts, people will see it's not the big bad monster that they thought it was going to be," Dicharry said.

Finally, does Dicharry have any advice for rising Corps leaders? "It might be good for young folks to move around a little more (than he did). But, I would not sacrifice family for personal development."



# Spring brings focus on levee heights and river stages

by David Longmire, Contract Writer  
Vicksburg District

The Vicksburg District and area levee boards are pressing to upgrade deficient Mississippi River levees in Louisiana and Arkansas.

After the flood of 1973, the worst since 1927, the district studied the Mississippi River levees and found they were deficient in many areas. Many were too low to provide adequate protection in the event of the worst flood that can reasonably be expected to occur, the “project design flood.”

Failure of a mainline Mississippi River at peak flood would lead to catastrophic damages in the affected state.

“We try to concentrate on the most deficient reaches first to bring them up to project design flood,” said Dean Trawick, Mississippi River levee project manager for the district.

The work, which includes levee enlargement, construction of berms and some relief wells, has concentrated on these two states during the past two to three years.

In 2002 there were 23.2 miles of levees under construction in Mississippi and six miles in Louisiana, he said. This past fall, 8.8 miles were awarded in Mississippi and 18.8 in Louisiana.

Kent Parrish, senior project manager, said excellent weather during the past few years has boosted the projects and have put many of the contractors ahead of schedule. “Currently there are approximately 100 miles of levee in Louisiana, 50



miles in Mississippi, and 20 miles in Arkansas deficient in grade,” he said.

“With Congress providing sufficient funding and the Fifth Louisiana Levee Board and Mississippi Levee Board providing the necessary rights of ways, the Vicksburg District has been able to make excellent progress. It has just been a great collaborative effort.”

Under the MR&T program, the authorized miles to be raised are a total 186.1 in Mississippi; 198.7 in Louisiana; and 75.6 in Arkansas. Already completed are 116.9 miles in Mississippi, 88.7 in Louisiana, and 55 miles in Arkansas.

Trawick said levee raising is complicated and there are several methods of controlling water seepage, which is one of the major concerns.

“When water gets up next to the levee, water tends to try to come through or under it.” The levee is built such that the water cannot pass through it, causing it to try to pass under it.

“If you don’t control that flow, you will have a problem. Even though the dirt will hold on one side of the levee, there could be weaknesses below the levee, that pressure has to be relieved,” Trawick said.

There are two ways to control the pressure. A berm on the land side keeps seepage from coming up near the levee and helps hold the water down to avoid any damage to the foundation of the levee itself, Trawick said.

*(see Levee, next page)*





### **-Levee-**

The Corps drills relief wells in cases where there is not enough room to maneuver to put in a berm.

"In a lot of places we are using a well which will regulate the material coming under the levee. The water is not the problem, but the pressure of that water moving material. The water table has to be relieved before it reaches the point of moving material with it," he said.

While reducing the threat of flooding, the district is also focusing on ways to improve the environment

or minimize environmental losses as part of the construction process.

"We have been working with landowners to produce a win-win scenario to make sure that our borrow pits are designed for duck habitats or aquatic habitats," Trawick said.

"We have been able to reduce impacts to the environment by using dredged material on our berms," Trawick said.

Existing berms are dug up and the good clay material is used to raise the levee. Then a retaining dike is built where the existing berm was located to hold dredged material, mainly

sand, which is then pumped in from the river to reconstruct the berm.

"By using this construction method, we minimize the amount of dirt needed which reduces the land we have to disturb," Trawick said.

Parrish said that the most deficient levees in Lake Providence and Mayersville have been enlarged while protecting bottomland hardwoods to the maximum extent by using this innovative technique. "For example, at Mayersville, the district was able to save over 500 acres of bottomland hardwoods by using material from the old berm to raise the levee," he said.



**2003 Engineer Dinner**  
**Saturday, June 14th**  
**6:00 p.m.**  
**Harrah's Casino**  
**Vicksburg, Mississippi**

**228th Engineer Day**  
**Awards Ceremony**  
**Thursday, June 19th**  
**1:30 p.m.**  
**U.S. District Court Room**  
**Post Office Building**  
**Second Floor**  
**Vicksburg, Mississippi**

**228th Engineer Day Picnic**  
**Friday, June 20th**  
**8:00 a.m.**  
**Clear Creek Golf Course**  
**Bovina, Mississippi**

**Look for the hard copy of**  
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